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DICK S. VON SCHRILTZ 1941

Cullum No. 12503-1941 | May 5, 1991 | Died in NY, NY

Interred in West Point Cemetery, West Point, NY



My friend *Dick Von Schrilztz* died suddenly on 5 May. When we left his home in Garrison, New York for the funeral at West Point, the weather was grey, overcast, the skies heavy with rain. The service for Dick was attended by family, neighbors, classmates, and friends from the toy soldier fraternity. As I sat in the old Cadet Chapel at the Academy, I thought of this gentle bear of a man who always smiled, always had something good to say of others, always had time for those interested in talking about the Army, West

Point or his lifelong hobby of military miniatures.

Dick was born on 8 November 1916 in Coldwater, Kansas to Leona Brown and Guy W. von Schrilztz, and by age eight had shown a proclivity for art and an interest in toy soldiers. He received an art scholarship to the State University of Kansas at Pittsburg, where he met and dated Anna Harr. In 1937, he received a West Point appointment.

In the *50th Anniversary Yearbook*, the story is told of how the "Baron," (as he was called) 6'2" and 200 lbs., came barreling through the sally port on his way to a formation and proceeded to run over Lieutenant Colonel Omar Bradley.

The day after graduation, he married Anna at the West Point Chapel and headed for his first duty assignment at Fort Benning, Georgia. After Pearl Harbor, he was assigned to the 84th Division, then on maneuvers in Louisiana. He trained Company E, 335th Infantry Regiment, 84th Division and in September 1944 sailed to England, then on to France, Holland and into combat on 29 November 1944 at a critical area of the Siegfried Line at Lindem, Germany. Dick was leading his company and making good progress against German infantry and tanks when he was wounded and captured in a firefight with elements of the fanatical 10th SS Panzer Grenadier Division. He was unduly interrogated because, with a name like Von Schrilztz, they felt he should have been on the German side! He was taken to a prisoner of war camp in Poland, escaped while being transferred to another camp and made his way back to allied hands. By April 1945, he was back in action at the Elbe River.

After the war he was transferred to the US Constabulary, taught defense tactics at the infantry school and was back in

Germany the day before the Korean War started. He was assigned to the 18th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division as S-2 and S-3 before getting a battalion. Then, back to the states to train signal corps recruits in infantry tactics at Camp Gordon, Georgia. Next duty was with the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Vietnam for a year before assignment to Psychological Warfare School and later command of the 1st Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet Battalion of Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

In 1960, Dick was assigned to Headquarters, European Command, in Orleans, France for three years, followed by four in the ROTC program at Indiana University. In 1967, he was assigned to J3, MAAG in Seoul, Korea as Psychological Warfare Officer. He retired at Fort Ben Harrison on 1 August 1969. In his 28 years in the Army, Colonel von Schrittz was awarded the Bronze Star, Bronze Star for Valor, Purple Heart, Commendation Medal, and numerous campaign medals and ribbons.

He combined his skill as an artist, his knowledge of the military and his penchant for research and accuracy into a collection of miniature military figures that probably exceeded 15,000 at one point. From May 1960 to November 1980, a portion of his collection, numbering several thousand figures, was on display in the Army Museum at Fort Leavenworth. His collection was entitled Regiments of the World from 1880 to 1914. This period was close to Dick's heart, as he himself wrote: "It was a very glamorous and colorful period of history but also a tragic period because it turned out to be the dazzling prelude to a terrible and trying era when the resplendent old empires were shaken to their very foundations and many disappeared in the upheaval. Picking this period offers the opportunity to contrast the world as it was in 1914 with the deadly divided half-slave, half-free earth we live on today."

What is truly remarkable about Dick's display is the fact that virtually none of the figures were "store-bought" but rather researched, created and painted by Dick himself. Whether it is German infantry from East Africa or Venezuelan cavalry, the hats, helmets, lances, guidons, swords, trappings, colors, etc., are accurate! He could look at a figure and at a glance and tell you where it was incorrect ... and then prove it in his library. When asked what he wanted done with his collection, which was so much a part of his life for over 60 years, he said, "I'd like to see this on display, maybe in Washington, where it can tell a story about the futility of war yet the need to train and prepare for war, if nations are to remain free and in control of their destiny."

Dick and Anna had four sons, Sam, Doug, Kurt, and Richard. Several of the boys have the same keen interest in militaria and eye for detail and accuracy as their dad.

His goal in life was to uphold the West Point motto, "Duty, Honor, Country" and he strove to leave an example that would help keep his country always free and the world a better place for all to live.

When the service at the old Cadet Chapel ended, we walked behind the Army Band and Honor Guard into the West Point Cemetery. The sun had come out, the dark skies had passed. The American flag on the parade ground snapped briskly in the breeze at the half staff. The rifle salute, the haunting notes of "Taps," the folding and presentation of the American flag to Anna and their sons, bid the final farewell to my friend. He will be missed by family, friends, and classmates. *Ave atque vale.*